



**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR WASTE TECHNICAL REVIEW BOARD**
2300 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 1300
Arlington, VA 22201

December 17, 2001

**The Honorable John Ensign
364 SROB
Washington, DC 20510-2805**

Dear Senator Ensign:

Thank you very much for the letter sent by you and Senator Harry Reid dated November 26, 2001. Your letter raises several important questions related to the Department of Energy's (DOE) Yucca Mountain site investigation.

As part of its ongoing review of the DOE's site-characterization activities, the Board is evaluating the technical and scientific validity of work that will form the technical basis for a decision by the Secretary of Energy on whether to recommend the Yucca Mountain site for repository development. I have enclosed a copy of a letter sent to Secretary Spencer Abraham indicating that the Board anticipates conveying to him and to Congress the results of the Board's review in the next few weeks. To ensure that all pertinent information is considered in our response, we would like to respond to your letter at the same time.

The Board very much appreciates your continued interest in its ongoing independent technical and scientific review of the Yucca Mountain program. If you have questions, please contact me or have your staff contact William Barnard, the Board's Executive Director.

Sincerely,

{Signed by}

**Jared L. Cohon
Chairman**

Enclosure



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR WASTE TECHNICAL REVIEW BOARD
2300 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 1300
Arlington, VA 22201

December 11, 2001

The Honorable Spencer Abraham
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Abraham:

The U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board (Board) was established by Congress in the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 1987. The Board evaluates the technical and scientific validity of the Department of Energy's (DOE) activities associated with characterizing a potential repository site at Yucca Mountain to dispose of high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel.

Late last month, the Board held a three-day business meeting to review, among other things, the latest round of reports and analyses, which were submitted to it in the week of November 19, 2001, by the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM). On the basis of that review and the results of the Board's ongoing evaluation of the civilian radioactive waste management program, the Board is preparing its comments for you and Congress on the technical and scientific validity of work that will form the basis of your decision on whether to recommend to the President that the Yucca Mountain site be developed for a repository. The Board intends to complete its comments within the next few weeks.

The Board appreciates the DOE's efforts to provide the OCRWM's latest studies so that this important information could be included in the Board's evaluation. The Board hopes that you will find its technical and scientific evaluation helpful in making your recommendation to the President.

Sincerely,

{Signed by}

Jared L. Cohon
Chair